

## § 727.7

(b) *Nature of assistance.* Legal assistance officers and administrative and clerical personnel assigned to legal assistance offices perform legal assistance duties as official duties in the capacity of an officer or an employee of the United States. Persons performing legal assistance duties, however, should not mislead those with whom they may deal into believing that their views or opinions are the official views or opinions of, approved by, or binding on, the Department of the Navy or the United States.

(c) *Duty to client.* A legal assistance officer should exercise his independent professional judgment on behalf of his client within the standards promulgated in the Code of Professional Responsibility and the specific limitations imposed in this part.

(d) *Professional legal advice.* Legal assistance is authorized for personal legal affairs only, as contrasted with military justice problems, business ventures, or matters that are not of a personal nature. Legal assistance duties are separate and apart from responsibilities of trial counsel, defense counsel, or others involved in processing courts-martial, nonjudicial punishments, administrative boards or proceedings, and investigations. Only legal assistance officers are authorized to render services that call for the professional judgment of a lawyer. The legal assistance officer may delegate tasks to clerks, secretaries, and other lay personnel provided the officer maintains a direct relationship with the client, supervises the delegated work, and has complete professional responsibility for the work product. Services that call for the professional judgment of a lawyer include, but are not limited to, the preparation of wills and powers of attorney, advising personnel with respect to legal rights and relationships, negotiating contracts, and other matters requiring an educated ability to relate the general body and philosophy of law to a specified legal problem of a client. Guidance in this matter may be had from various official sources including the ethical considerations under the Code of Pro-

## 32 CFR Ch. VI (7-1-12 Edition)

fessional Responsibility of the American Bar Association.

[41 FR 26863, June 30, 1976, as amended at 47 FR 41561, Sept. 21, 1982; 65 FR 26748, May 9, 2000]

### § 727.7 Limitations on service provided.

(a) *Assistance in official military matters.* Legal Assistance duties are separate and apart from the responsibilities of a trial counsel, defense counsel, or other officer involved in the processing of courts-martial, nonjudicial punishment, administrative boards or proceedings, investigations, or other official military matters. Frequently, a service member accused or suspected of an offense or conduct leading to an administrative proceeding will request advice from the legal assistance officer. In such a case, the service member should be advised of the proper procedures for obtaining counsel or advice. This limitation does not prevent the assignment of the same officer to perform the functions of a legal assistance officer and the functions of a defense counsel, counsel for respondent, or counsel for a party.

(b) *Domestic-relations cases.* In domestic-relations cases, a legal assistance officer may provide advice concerning the legal and practical implications of divorce, legal separation, annulment, custody, and paternity. Assistance and advice in domestic violence cases will be consistent with the Department of the Navy family advocacy program. If two or more eligible persons with conflicting interests seek legal assistance from the same office on the same matter, the party first establishing an attorney-client relationship will be provided representation. Other parties shall be advised that they are also eligible for assistance, but that it must be obtained from another source, with the assistance of and referral by the first office.

(c) *Nonlegal advice.* The legal assistance officer, while giving legal advice, may also determine that the client needs or desires advice on related nonlegal matters. The legal assistance officer should provide legal advice only, or defer giving such advice, and

## Department of the Navy, DoD

## § 727.10

refer the client to an appropriate person or agency for such nonlegal counseling. The legal assistance officer should establish and maintain a working relationship with those individuals who are qualified to provide nonlegal counseling services.

(d) *Proceedings involving the United States.* A legal assistance officer shall not advise on, assist in, or become involved with, individual interests opposed to or in conflict with the United States without the specific approval of the Judge Advocate General.

(e) *Telephone inquiries.* In the absence of unusual or compelling circumstances, legal advice should not be given over the telephone. This does not prohibit appropriate follow-up telephone discussions between the legal assistance attorney and the client.

[41 FR 26863, June 30, 1976, as amended at 65 FR 26749, May 9, 2000]

### § 727.8 Confidential and privileged character of service provided.

All information and files pertaining to the persons served will be treated as confidential and privileged in the legal sense as outlined in the Code of Professional Responsibility, as opposed to confidential in the military sense of security information. These privileged matters may not be disclosed to anyone by personnel rendering the service, except upon the specific permission of the person concerned, and disclosure thereof may not be lawfully ordered by superior military authority. This restriction does not prohibit providing the nonprivileged statistical data required by § 727.13 of this part. Protection of the confidences of a legal assistance client is essential to the proper functioning of the legal assistance program in order to assure all military personnel, regardless of grade, rank, or position, that they may disclose frankly and completely all material facts of their problem to those rendering the service without fear that their confidence will be abused or used against them in any way. While case files are not subject to the control of the Department of the Navy and therefore do not constitute a "system of records" within the meaning of the Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. 552a), no information which identifies an individual legal as-

sistance client by name or any other particular, such as social security number, shall be extracted from the case files and incorporated into any file or index system aside from or in addition to the information contained on the legal assistance form (NAVJAG 5801/9) or locally used equivalent. Strict adherence to the foregoing will ensure compliance with the Privacy Act. Administrative and clerical personnel assigned to legal assistance offices shall maintain the confidential nature of matters handled.

[42 FR 35957, July 13, 1977, as amended at 65 FR 26749, May 9, 2000]

### § 727.9 Referrals to civilian lawyers.

(a) *General.* If it is determined that the legal assistance requested is beyond the scope of this part, or if no available legal assistance officer is qualified to give the assistance requested, the client should be referred to a civilian lawyer. When the client does not know of a lawyer whom he wishes to represent him, his case may be referred to an appropriate bar organization, lawyer referral service, legal aid society, or other local organization for assistance in obtaining reliable, competent, and sympathetic counsel, or to a civilian lawyer designated by such organization.

(b) *Fees charged by civilian lawyers.* Legal assistance clients being referred to a civilian lawyer should be advised that, even when the fee to be charged is set by statute or subject to court approval, it should be one of the first items discussed to avoid later misunderstandings and eliminate uncertainty. Legal assistance officers should exercise caution in discussing possible fees to be charged by civilian lawyers so as to avoid embarrassment or misunderstanding between the client and his civilian lawyer.

### § 727.10 Fees, compensation, solicitation, and representation in civilian courts.

(a) *General.* Active duty military personnel and civilian employees of the Navy and Marine Corps are prohibited from accepting or receiving, directly or indirectly, any fee or compensation of any nature, in cash or otherwise, for legal services rendered to any person